CLAIMS

1. A method for charging for services in an IP based communication system, comprising: establishing an accounting session between a network element and a charging function for the session; and initiating a change in the accounting session at the charging function.

2. A method according to claim 1 wherein the step of initiating a change in the accounting session comprises transmitting a request to update the accounting session from the charging function to the network element.

3. A method according to claim 2 wherein the request is an update accounting request message.

4. A method according to claim 2 or claim 3 wherein responsive to the request the network element implements a change in the charging of the accounting session.

5. A method according to any one of claims 2 to 4 wherein responsive to the request the network element transmits an acknowledgement to the charging function.

6. A method according to claim 5 wherein the acknowledgement is an update accounting acknowledgement message.

7. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 6 wherein the network element is a controller of the communications session.

8. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 7 wherein the step of establishing an accounting session includes establishing an accounting session between the charging function and a further network element.

9. A method according to claim 8 further comprising the step of establishing an accounting session between an application for the session and the charging function.

10. A method according to claim 8 or 9 further comprising the step of establishing an accounting session between a control function for the session and the charging function.

11. A method according to claim 9 or claim 10 wherein the change in the accounting session between the network element controlling the session and the charging function is responsive to a change in the at least one further accounting session.

12. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 11, wherein the accounting session is associated with a pre-paid charging function.

13. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 12 wherein the IP based communication system supports a Diamater IP protocol.

14. An element for monitoring charging in an IP based communication system, comprising: means for establishing an accounting session with an application; means for informing a network element controlling an associated communication session of the accounting session; and means for initiating a change in the accounting session.

15. An element according to claim 14 wherein the means for initiating a change in the accounting session includes means for transmitting a request to update the accounting session.

16. An element according to claim 15 wherein the request is an update accounting request message.

17. An element according to claim 15 or claim 16 wherein a change in the charging of the accounting session is implemented responsive to the request.

18. An element according to any one of claims 15 to 17 wherein responsive to the request the network element transmits an acknowledgement to the charging function.

19. An element according to claim 18 wherein the acknowledgement is an update accounting acknowledgement message.

20. An element according to any one of claims 14 to 19 wherein the network element is a controller of the communications session.

21. An element according to any one of claims 14 to 20 wherein the communication system supports a Diameter IP protocol.

22. An element according to claim 21 when dependent upon claim 15, wherein the request signal is transferred using a Diameter IP protocol.

23. An element according to claim 21 when dependent upon claim 18, wherein the acknowledgement signal is transferred using a Diameter IP protocol.

24. A communication system in which charging for the provision of services is implemented in a session, the system comprising: a network element for controlling the session; an application for the session; a control function for the session; and a charging function, wherein at least one accounting session is established between the charging function and at least one of the network element, the application and the control function, wherein the charging function is adapted to initiate a change in the at least one accounting session.

25. A communication system according to claim 24 wherein the charging is pre-paid charging.

26. A communication session according to claim 24 or claim 25 wherein there is provided a plurality of accounting sessions, wherein the charging function initiates a change in one accounting session responsive to a change in another accounting session.